



NEWS RELEASE

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Anti-Smuggling Operation Nets 415 Arrests In Cooperation With European and Asian Countries

WASHINGTON – In a multinational effort against international alien smuggling, Acting Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) Commissioner Kevin Rooney today announced the successful completion of Operation Firm Grip, part of a series of operations designed to disrupt the activities of alien smugglers worldwide. The operation was the most geographically diverse of its kind to date, spanning six nations on two continents, and resulted in the interception of 415 aliens from 37 nations destined for the United States and other Western countries.

Operation Firm Grip was a coordinated effort by INS, working with host country law enforcement organizations and airline security officers, to target global alien smugglers in Colombo, Sri Lanka; Mumbai and New Delhi, India; Bangkok, Thailand; Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; Amsterdam, Netherlands and Singapore. The three-week operation from May 29 to June 18 was carried out to identify and prosecute alien smugglers and prevent them from bringing their human cargo through participating countries and on to the United States.

It was the first such operation to include a large European gateway airport, Schiphol in Amsterdam, in conjunction with airports in South Asia. It was also the first to include a large Asian gateway airport, Don Muang International in Bangkok, along with South Asian and European airports, and to assess and interdict the simultaneous movement of illegal migrants in both eastward and westward directions.

Key to the successful operation was the cooperation of liaison officers from Western countries with similar illegal immigration problems and the leading role by national police agencies and immigration officials from the six participating countries.

The operation, which involved 18 INS agents and more than 100 law enforcement officials from participating countries, was conducted mainly through passenger screening of 839 flights at major international airports. Of the 415 individuals intercepted, 118 were taken into custody by local police officials for various offenses, including impersonation, possession of fraudulent or altered travel documents and alien smuggling. During the operation, 45 individuals were identified or intercepted while smuggling aliens. In addition, agents intercepted 337 counterfeit, fraudulent or altered documents.

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Operation Firm Grip trained 193 individuals at seven locations in fraudulent document identification and immigration screening techniques at the request of local law enforcement and airline security staffs.

INS –

Nationality	Total
Sri Lanka	98
People's Republic of China	61
India	59
Unknown	48
Pakistan	30
Bangladesh	17
Iran	16
Malaysia	13
Philippines	12
Nigeria	8
United Kingdom	7
Ethiopia	5
Myanmar	3
South Africa	3
Taiwan	3
Vietnam	3
Albania	2
Greece	2
Iraq	2
Netherlands	2
Russia	2
Nepal	2
USC	2
Guinea	1
Jordan	1
Kenya	1
Korea	1
New Zealand	1
Palestine	1
Poland	1
Romania	1
Cambodia	1
Ireland	1
Australia	1
Canada	1
Somalia	1
Ecuador	1
Germany	1
TOTAL	415

Document Type	Total
Photo-substitution Passport	108
Analysis Incomplete	42
Counterfeit Foreign Visa	35
Intending Immigrant	34
Counterfeit Biographical Page	23
Counterfeit Passport	23
Altered Foreign Visa	15
Biographical Page-substitution	10
Counterfeit ADIT Stamp	7
Altered Foreign Refugee Travel Document	6
Altered Passport	6
Counterfeit US Visa	4
Altered US Visa	3
Counterfeit Foreign Residence Permit	3
Mala Fide Seamen	3
Altered Foreign Travel Document	2
Counterfeit Foreign EAD	2
Counterfeit Laissez-passe	2
Fraudulently Obtained Passport	2
Counterfeit EAD	1
Counterfeit I-512	1
Counterfeit IMM-1000	1
Counterfeit I-551	1
Expired Passport	1
Mala fide TWOV	1
Photo-sub Foreign Residency Permit	1
TOTAL	337